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ABSTRACT

Wordless picture books are a gift to the student of English as a Second Language (ESL). A strong story line is delivered through illustrations which are thoughtfully prepared. These books free the ESL student to draw from personal experience and write the story at his own ability level from personal vocabulary. Self-expression and creative thinking are encouraged, and students can share the books with non-English-speaking adults. The student is introduced to reading skills, and these skills are reinforced. Wordless books provide a rich source of material for student-centered, authentic language development activities that are satisfying and successful. Possible activities using the books and students' interpretations of them include: creation of an audiotape from students' written stories; having the teacher tell the newly-written story to non-English-speakers; having students, working alone, arrange photocopied pictures in their own order; having the students "read" the pictures, then listen to the teacher tell the story; having the group create a sentence per page; having one student tell the whole class the story; and having students match teacher-created sentences to the pictures. A bibliography lists 215 wordless books and rates them on a scale of one to five. (MSE)

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Using Wordless Books in Your ESL Class

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Wordless Books

Wordless books are a gift to the ESOL student. A strong story line is delivered through the use of beautiful illustrations which are carefully and thoughtfully prepared. The images are the text, and everything in them contributes to the advancement of the plot and the revelation of the personalities of the characters. Each character's posture, gestures and facial expressions reveal so much of his emotions and feelings.

Look at the illustration on the cover, taken from Mercer Mayer's A Boy, A Dog, A Frog and a Friend. See how it invites you to become an active participant, to use your own voice to recount the narrative.

Since wordless books actively engage the reader's thought and imagination, they stimulate creative writing and are an ideal medium for initiating writing activities. Their attractiveness draws one in. The reader is required to be an active composer, to bring his personal interpretation to the story telling.

The partnership between the author and reader is exciting. The reader is given the opportunity to participate in creating meaning in collaboration with the author. This helps to develop sophistication in story making and gives the student a great sense of satisfaction in the professional result.

These books include familiar elements of the student's own environment, but they have complex themes and emotions. The reader who glances quickly through the pages may miss significant details that enrich the story and characterizations. The reader is encouraged to slow down, become involved in the story and craft his writing carefully.

The ESOL student often knows how to express himself in writing in his first language. These books free him to draw from his personal experiences and write the story at his own level of ability using his personal vocabulary. He is given the independence of guiding himself through the book.

Self-expression and creative thinking are encouraged through a natural peer-level experience. He can share the book with a non-English speaking adult. The non-reader is introduced to reading skills. The reader has them reinforced. Wordless books provide a rich source of material for student-centered, authentic language development activities which are satisfying, enjoyable and successful.

Resources

1. Richey, Virginia and Katharyn E. Puckett
   Wordless/Almost Wordless Picture Books: A Guide
   Englewood, CO; Libraries Unlimited, 1992
   Comprehensive annotated bibliography of hundreds of wordless books

2. Tuten-Puckett, Katharyn E. and Virginia Richey
   Using Wordless Picture Books: Authors and Activities
   1993
   Each chapter focuses on one author and one or more of his books.
   Activities abound.

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1. Make an audio tape

After the student writes his story, he practices telling it to another class member. Then he makes an audio tape. He can keep a copy of the tape and take the book home for a day to share with his family.

2. Teacher tells the story to non-English speakers

This is an enjoyable way to teach English. The teacher tells the story in very simple sentences and encourages the student to add what he knows. Language patterns are established and reinforced, reading skills are introduced and vocabulary is developed.

3. Cooperative learning

Reduce 9 pages from a wordless book. Give a set to each student. One student acts as the leader and arranges his pictures in a particular order. He works behind "office walls" made of manilla folders so that no one else can see his pictures. He then describes his pictures and their location while the other students try to arrange their own pictures the same way. They, too, work behind "office walls". The teacher offers help to clarify instructions since they can become rather difficult to understand.

4. Non-English speakers read the book to themselves

Students are given the book to read to themselves. Later the teacher tells it to them. I find they are quite interested in hearing the teacher read it after they have already read through it themselves.

5. Group reading

Show the book to the group page by page. Either ask the group to come up with one sentence per page, or ask individuals to make up a sentence for each page.

6. Oral reading by one student

One student tells the entire story to the others in the group. I limit his output to one sentence per page because of the time it takes to make up sentences for 32 pages and keep the others' attention.

7. Individual story writing

Each student chooses a different book. He writes one sentence per page, trying to capture the essence of the action. He writes a sloppy copy, skipping lines. He edits once, then confers with the teacher. Then he writes his final copy on a sheet of paper or on sentence strips.

8. King for a day / Queen for a day

This project follows nicely after #7. Write each sentence on a sentence strip. Spread them out in random order on a table. The other students have a few minutes to read them over to themselves. The king or queen wears a crown and carries a scepter. He taps the other students, one at a time, to match up the sentence strip with the appropriate picture. If the correct sentence strip is chosen, the king or queen gives him a cardboard cut-out heart or other token. Prizes are returned after the story is completed. (The king or queen is the person who wrote the story.)

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Wordless Books Bibliography

(on a scale of 1-5)
(5 is the best)

Alexander, Martha
- 3* Out! Out! Out! (a bird gets loose in the house)
- 5* Bobo's Dream (a boy and his dog)

Aliki
- 5* Tabby: A Story in Pictures (a girl adopts a kitten)

Anderson, Lena Castell
- 3* Bunny Party
- 3* Bunny Story (K-2)

Anno, Mitsumasa
- 3* Anno's Alphabet
- 3* Anno's Animals
- 3* Anno's Britain
- 3* Anno's Counting House
- 3* Anno's Fleamarket
- 3* Anno's Italy
- 3* Anno's Journey
- 3* Anno's Peekaboo
- 3* Anno's U.S.A.
- 3* Dr. Anno's Magical Midnight Circus
- 3* Topsy Turvies: More Pictures to Stretch the Imagination (a la Escher)
- 3* Topsy Turvies: Pictures to Stretch the Imagination

Ardizzone, Edward
- 3* Wrong Side of the Bed

Arnosky, Jim
- 5* Nathaniel

Baker, Jeannie
- 4* Window (each picture looks out upon the changing scene over the years of a boy's life)

Bakken, Harold
- 5* A Special String (as a boy rolls up a big ball of string, he helps people along the way)

Bang, Molly
- 3* The Grey Lady and the Strawberry Snatcher

Banyai, Istvan
- 5* R.E.M.
- 3* Rezoom
- 5* Zoom

Bartlett, T.C.
- 3* Tuba Lessons (boy meets animals on his way)

Blake, Quentin
- 5* Clown (the only drawback is that it's very long)

Bonners, Susan
- 5* Just In Passing (the story of a yawn spreading from person to person)

Briggs, Raymond
- 4* The Snowman (the only drawback is that it's very long)
- 3* Father Christmas

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Brown, Craig
4* Patchwork Farmer

Bullock, Kathleen
5* The Rabbits Are Coming

Butterworth, Nick
4* Amanda's Butterfly

Carle, Eric
2* Do You Want to be My Friend?
No I See a Song

Carrier, Lark
2* Snowy Path: A Christmas Journey

Carroll, Ruth
5* Chimp and the Clown (chimp gets loose from the circus)
5* Christmas Kitten (kitten ingratiates his way into a warm home)
5* Rolling Downhill (kitten and puppy wrapped up in a ball of yarn)
4* What Whiskers Did (puppy runs away through a forest)

Chesworth, Michael
3* Rainy Day Dream

Collington, Peter
4* Angel and the Soldier Boy (toys come to life)
5* Little Pickle (girl gets into mischief around the neighborhood)
4* Midnight Circus
3* My Darling Kitten
4* On Christmas Eve
4* A Small Miracle (creche figures help an old woman)
4* Tooth Fairy

Crews, Donald
3* Truck

Cristini, Ermanno
3* In My Garden (very large, simple drawings)
No In the Pond
3* In the Woods (very close-up illustrations)

Daughtry, Duanne
2* What's Inside? (black and white pictures of purse, egg, cage, etc.)

Day, Alexandra
5* Carl Goes Shopping
5* Carl Goes to Daycare
5* Carl Makes a Scrapbook
5* Carl's Afternoon in the Park
5* Carl's Birthday
5* Carl's Christmas
5* Carl's Masquerade
5* Good Dog, Carl

Degen, Bruce
5* Aunt Possum and the Pumpkin Man (rabbit plays a scary trick)

DeGroat, Diane
5* Alligator's Toothache (his friends help him overcome his fear)

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DePaola, Tomie
- 3* Flicks
- 3* Hunter and the Animals
- 4* Pancakes for Breakfast
- 4* Sing, Pierrot, Sing

Drescher, Henrik
- 4* Yellow Umbrella (2 monkeys fly over the jungle with an umbrella)

Dubois, Claude
- 5* He's MY Jumbo (K-2) (siblings argue over a stuffed animal)

DuPasquier, Philippe
- 4* I Can't Sleep (family members have a hard time sleeping)
- 5* Our House on the Hill

Emberley, Ed
- 5* A Birthday Wish (an amazing chain of events)

Ernst, Lisa
- 3* The Bee (K-2) (1 color on each page)
- 3* Up to Ten and Down Again (K-2) (beautiful illustrations of objects, for example, 9 hats)

Euvremer, Teryl
- 5* Sun's Up

Felix, Monique
- 3* Colors
- 3* The House
- 3* The Wind

Florian, Douglas
- 4* The City (no story but rich pictures of New York City)

Fromm, Lilo
- 3* Muffel and Plums (K-2)

Goodall, John
- 5* The Adventures of Paddy Pork
- 4* Ballooning Adventures of Paddy Pork
- 5* Creepy Castle
- 5* An Edwardian Christmas
- 4* An Edwardian Holiday (vacation)
- 4* An Edwardian Season
- 4* An Edwardian Summer
- 4* Jacko (monkey on a ship)
- 5* Little Red Riding Hood (the classic)
- 5* The Midnight Adventures of Kelly, Dot and Esmeralda
- 4* Naughty Nancy
- 4* Naughty Nancy Goes to School
- 3* Paddy Pork: Odd Jobs
- 3* Paddy Pork's Holiday (he goes camping)
- 5* Paddy to the Rescue
- 5* Paddy Under Water
- 3* Paddy's Evening Out
- 5* Paddy's New Hat
- 3* The Story of a Castle
- 3* The Story of a Farm
- 4* The Story of a Main Street
- 4* The Story of an English Village (from medieval to modern)
- 5* The Surprise Picnic

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Graham, Alastair
5* Full Moon Soup, or the Fall of the Hotel (spaceship hits hotel)

Hamberger, John
4* The Sleepless Day (owl can't get rest)

Hartelius, Margaret A.
5* The Chicken's Child (hen raises an alligator)

Heller, Linda
3* Lily at the Table

Henstra, Frise
5* Mighty Mizzling Mouse and the Red Cabbage House

Hoban, Russell
4* Crocodile and Pierrot (crocodile steals mime's doll)

Hoban, Tana
3* Big Ones, Little Ones
3* Circles, Triangles and Squares
3* Dig, Drill, Dump and Fill
3* Is It Larger? Is It Smaller?
4* Is It Red? Is It Yellow? Is It Blue?
3* Is It Rough? Is It Smooth? Is It Shiny?
3* Look Again
3* Look! Look! Look!
4* Look Up, Look Down
3* Of Colors and Things
3* Shadows and Reflections
3* Shapes and Things
4* Shapes, Shapes, Shapes
3* Take Another Look

Hughes, Shirley
5* Up and Up

Hutchins, Pat
2* Changes, Changes (K-2)

Imershein, Betsy
3* Finding Red, Finding Yellow (K-2) (photographs of red and yellow things)

Karlin, Bernie
5* Meow (1 word, meow, on each page, but it's a very good story)

Keats, Ezra Jack
4* Clementina's Cactus (K-2)
4* Kitten For A Day
3* Psst, Doggie
4* Skates

Koren, E.
3* Behind the Wheel (no plot, but it shows the control panels inside various vehicles)

Krahn, Fernando
4* Amanda and the Mysterious Carpet
5* April Fools
5* Arthur's Adventures in the Abandoned House
5* The Biggest Christmas Tree on Earth

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Krahn, Fernando (continued)
- 5* Catch That Cat
- 4* The Creepy Thing
- 5* A Flying Saucer Full of Spaghetti
- 5* A Funny Friend From Heaven
- 5* The Great Ape
- 5* Here Comes Alex Pumpernickel
- 5* How Santa Claus Had a Long and Difficult Journey Delivering His Presents
- 3* Little Love Story (Valentine's Day)
- 5* Mystery of the Giant Footprints
- 5* Robot-Bot-Bot
- 5* Sebastian and the Mushroom
- 5* Secret in the Dungeon
- 5* The Self-Made Snowman
- 5* Sleep Tight, Alex Pumpernickel
- 5* Who's Seen the Scissors?

Lindblom, Steven
- 5* Let's Give Kitty a Bath!

Lisker, Sonia O.
- 3* Lost (poignant story of a boy lost at the zoo)

MacGregor, Marilyn
- 4* Baby Takes a Trip (K-2)

Maizlich, Lisa
- 4* The Ring (a magic ring)

Mayer, Mercer
- 5* Ah-Choo!
- 5* A Boy, A Dog, A Frog and A Friend
- 5* A Boy, A Dog, and A Frog
- 5* Bubble Bubble
- 5* Frog Goes to Dinner
- 5* Frog On His Own
- 5* Frog, Where Are You?
- 5* The Great Cat Chase
- 3* Hiccup
- 5* Oops (clumsy hippo)
- 5* Two Moral Tales

McClintock, Barbara
- 3* Headaches of a French Cat (very sophisticated level)

McCully, Emily
- 5* The Christmas Gift
- 5* The First Snow
- 5* The New Baby
- 5* Picnic
- 5* School

Mogensen, Jan
- 3* The Forty-Six Little Men (almost too much detail)

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Morris, Terry Nell
3* Lucky Puppy! Lucky Boy!

Oakley, Graham
5* Graham Oakley's Magical Changes

Ormerod, Jan
3* Moonlight (K-2)
3* Sunshine (K-2)

Oxenbury, Helen
4* Beach Day (K-2)
4* Mother's Helper (K-2)

Popov, Nikolaï
5* Why? (story of escalating hostility)

Prater, John
5* The Gift (children enjoy playing with the box more)

Rosenfeldt, Robert
5* A Day on the Avenue

Rohmann, Eric
3* Time Flies

Saltzberg, Barney
3* The Yawn

Sasaki, Isao
3* Snow

Schories, Pat
5* Mouse Around

Schubert, Dieter
5* Where's My Monkey?

Schweninger, Ann
3* Dance For Three

Simmons, Ellie
3* Wheels (K-2)

Sis, Peter
2* Ocean World

Smith, Lane
3* Flying Jake

Spier, Peter
4* Dreams
5* Noah's Ark
5* Peter Spier's Christmas
5* Peter Spier's Rain

Tafuri, Nancy
5* Do Not Disturb
4* Early One Morning in the Barn
3* Follow Me
4* Have You Seen My Duckling?
4* Junglewalk (K-2)
4* Rabbit's Morning (K-2)

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Tanaka, Hideyuki
5* The Happy Dog (very cheerful stories)

Turkle, Brinton
5* Deep in the Forest

Ueno, Noriko
3* Elephany Buttons

Ungerer, Tomi
4* Snail, Where Are You?

Vincent, Gabrielle
5* Breakfast Time, Ernest and Celestine
4* Ernest and Celestine's Patchwork Quilt

Wegen, Ronald
5* The Balloon Trip (hot air balloon over New York City)

Wezel, Peter
3* The Good Bird (K-2) (story of kindness)

Wiesner, David
5* Free Fall
4* Tuesday

Winter, Paula
4* The Bear and the Fly (bear tries to kill a fly and ends up knocking out all the members of his family - a little violent)
5* Sir Andrew (donkey gets all dressed up, admires himself in mirrors and gets into trouble all day)

Young, Ed
5* The Other Bone
3* Up a Tree

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